
Myths About American Muslim Families

Because of recent national events, American Muslim families are being noticed today more than ever before. American Muslims have a distinct character from Muslims abroad because they live and work in an American culture.

Many were born here and have lived in the United States their entire lives. Just as there is a wide variation in Christians, it is not easy to describe an average American Muslim. But, there are some common myths that do **not** accurately describe most of these families.

MYTH: *American Muslim women are not treated well.*

Contrary to common belief, most Muslim women are well educated and either decide not to marry until they have completed their studies, or they return to school later when their children are older. In the Muslim tradition, caregiving, including raising children, is shared between spouses with men taking as much responsibility as women. Muslim women often dress differently than other American women. This is related to a broader kind of modest behavior known as “adab,” which is an important sign of maturity for both Muslim men and women. Adab involves not calling excessive attention to oneself while behaving (and dressing) in a way that clearly identifies one as Muslim.

MYTH: *American Muslim children are seen as property.*

Children are called “amana” which means trust. Muslims view children as “on loan” from God, and parents are entrusted to care for them.

While children are expected to be obedient, they are treasured. They often are not responsible for many household chores but, instead, are encouraged to study. Parents discourage premarital intimacy and unsupervised dating or parties.

MYTH: *American Muslim families are secretive and isolated.*

Although most families live, are educated, and work in communities with other Americans, there is some emphasis on the family and religious community. Muslims highly value relationships with extended family and friends, so families tend to try to live close to one another. The elderly and disabled are viewed as blessings and are cared for within the family or close-knit community.

MYTH: *American Muslim families are “different” from other American families.*

While most faithful Muslims do not drink alcohol or eat pork, in many important ways, they are like other American families. They value education and love their children. They work hard. And, they encourage respectful, loving relationships between husbands and wives.

During this time of international turmoil, American Muslim families, like other American families, must continue raising their children, working at their jobs, and living their daily lives. By challenging these and other myths, we may better understand our Muslim neighbors as we all work to make sense of and improve our world.

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